

Levi Pennington

People

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Pennington to Mary & Cecil Pearson, June 3, 1965

Levi T. Pennington

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June 3, 1965.

Dear Mary and Cecil:--

Without any important news to give you, I'm starting a letter to you which I guarantee not to start on its way today, and I think it will not be finished tomorrow, and I might hold it till over Sunday. No promises nor threats.

One thing I want to ask about, and that is the width of your wheel chair, just how many inches from one big wheel straight across to the other. Maybe there is not enough difference between different makes of such chairs so that one needs to worry; but I'd hate to get the ramp made and find it so narrow that a wheel was too likely to run off the outer edge of the ramp, or so wide that it was likely to run off the inner edge of one of the runways. The ramp that we had in 1963 has been made into a work-bench, but Victor Johnston, who used to be a bridge builder before a back disorder put him out of that job, has truck loads of two inch planks of which he suggests that I might have the use for nothing. I'll not be having this ramp built before I get back here on the 14th, but I want to have it ready in plenty of time.*

It is still my plan to go to Medford on the 9th, and be there over the following week end. I hope that Dr. Claude Lewis will still think he wants to take me fishing on one of the lakes there, but I have had no word from him, and maybe I'll not have any.

You know my program through the 8th -- I think I've given it to you "again and again and again" as a former president of the United States said in the only "fireside chat" that I ever heard from his "golden voice." Now it seems that a meeting of Friends and other friends interested in the work of the American Friends Service Committee will be meeting here some evening between the 14th and the 19th, to get acquainted with John Sullivan, our new executive secretary and his wife -- at least I hope that his wife is to be with him. (Yes, I'll do some house-cleaning before that day. But I've already done some, and I hope it won't look too bad.)

One thing that I am going to miss by this trip will be the graduating of Meridith Hester from the University of Oregon Medical School. She is such a tiny little body that it seems a bit strange to think of her as an M.D., but she is so keen and capable that I am confident that she will make a capable physician.

Victor Johnston has just been here, and we have made our plans for that ramp, and it appears that I am to have the material and his labor as a gift. Some time after the 14th he'll bring the material and we'll make that ramp, and have it all ready when you get here.

Have I told you that our yearly meeting superintendent, Dean Gregory had a heart attack Sunday morning, and is in the hospital? I have enquired about his condition every day, and sometimes more than once a day, and the reply has been "He is in a serious condition;" but today after an inquiry by the girl at the switchboard, the reply was, "He is in fair condition." I asked if that was not better than "serious" and was told, "It certainly is."

June 4. 11:30 A. M. I've just got dressed, which is "nothing to write home about" in most cases, but in this case it registers a real achievement. Last night there was a communication from Philadelphia by way of Seattle, wanting to get "right now" the opinions of members of the Executive Committee on the advisability of another pronouncement by the American Friends Service Committee on the Viet Nam situation, and it raised a lot of questions that if I answered at all required more than making a check in a square or something equally or almost equally simple. So I worked on that till it was after one o'clock, or maybe it was after two o'clock, when I turned out the light and went to sleep. I was awake at six o'clock, and had a notion to get up, but I had another notion, and turned off the light and went to sleep again.

I had a very good time last evening at the home of Arthur and Gwendolyn Winters, with her aunt, Olive Johnson Shambaugh as the other guest.

I have just called the hospital to enquire as to the condition of Dean Gregory, our yearly meeting superintendent, and they told me that his condition is "satisfactory," that he is "coming right along" with definite improvement.

And I do not expect to see Mrs. Sullivan, on the 8th at our peace committee meeting, nor when a group meets here between the 14th and the 19th, not at the Executive Committee Meeting on the 19th. I had forgotten that she is still in Maine or Massachusetts or Madagascar or somewhere, till after school closes. His vacation is the month of July, when he will go back and bring the family to Oregon in the car, visiting relatives and friends on the way. I knew that, but I "fregot", as Bertha May Nicholson used to say long before her name was Nicholson.

Tonight is the Commencement Dinner, when Lansing Bulgen, formerly on our music faculty for a time, is to speak on ACCO, which being interpreted is Associated Christian Colleges of Oregon. It would appear that there are three Christian colleges in Oregon, George Fox College, Cascade College and Warner-Pacific College, the latter two of Portland. There is some sort of cooperative activity of these three colleges planned, some combination of parts of libraries, and probably some common classes; talk of a common center, perhaps at Tigard, all considered by some a fine arrangement, a delightful example of Christian cooperation, etc., and by others seen as a very doubtful arrangement, by which George Fox is likely to lose some things for which a Quaker college ought to stand. We can't all see things alike. When Esther remarried Cassius, some considered it a disgraceful scandal, and others looked on it as a direct answer to prayer.

There is to be a "fellowship" program before the dinner this evening, with music of various sorts, and with President Ross the master of ceremonies for that as well as for the program that is to follow the banquet. The whole affair is to be at the new Senior High School east of the college canyon and well back from the Portland Road. Next year they hope to have the dinner at the Heacock Commons, now under construction.

I do not know how many honorary degrees will be awarded this year, nor who is to receive them.* George Fox has been much more liberal along that line than Pacific College ever was. But our one honorary degree went to a more distinguished student of former years than some who have been given doctor's degrees, some of which were well deserved and appropriate, and some of them.....

* There were none.

And now it is the 5th, and not yet eight o'clock A.M. I've mailed some letters and a copy of Variable winds as a sort of graduating present to Dr. Meredith Hester, who is to receive her diploma next week, but who has everything done but the formal graduating exercise, and is moving her things back to the parental home in Newberg. She has passed her national examination, her externship is done, and she begins her internship very soon after her graduation on the 11th. I'm enclosing a clipping from the McMinnville Shopper, which I'd like to have returned if you please, as I think Bertha May will want it for her scrap book. Dr. Meredith is bigger than a peanut, bigger than two peanuts, as a matter of fact, but not so big physically as I'd expect a woman doctor to be; but I have a very high regard for her and I believe she will be a very successful physician, and will have a fine career in that profession if some young man of good judgment does not persuade her to become his wife. And there are a few cases, at least, and maybe more than I suppose, where a woman is both a successful wife and a successful physician.

I was one of the folks at the Commencement dinner last evening, at the dining room at the new Senior High School, where about 175 friends of the college sat down at \$50 a plate. We ate a very good dinner, with roast beef that was, to my taste, the best I ever ate except the slice I had in New York once at a hotel where I was treating myself to a dinner in celebration of the acceptance of Pacific College as a standard college of Oregon; we listened to some very good singing by Dean of Students Lauthan, who is choir director at the Friends Church here, accompanied on the harp by a lady who is a good harpist and a member of the college music faculty; President Ross was master of ceremonies, and spoke repeatedly, and in his expression of appreciation of those who have made the college possible he mentioned me, and the audience applauded as I do not often hear applause interrupt a speaker these days; and Lansing Bulgin talked about "A New Dimension in Higher Education", referring to ACCO, the Association of Christian Colleges of Oregon.

I could have wished for more detail as to the proposed methods of cooperation, but much of it is thus far tentative, I suppose. The plan is supposed to mean greater economy; a cooperation among the three colleges involved, cooperation that will mean that no college can always have its own way; the possible abandonment of the old and safe and familiar for the new and adventurous; and it is supposed to have a medicinal value that will prevent hardening of educational arteries.

The three colleges have a total of about 1,000 pupils; some classes must be maintained at present by each college that are too small to be as effective as if they were larger, and that require a specialist for each of the three colleges whereas one teacher could handle as many students as all three colleges could provide for that subject, and so on. But it is not supposed to destroy or even mar the individuality of the college. The speaker pointed out the fact that each of the colleges has about 25,000 books in its library, but that a spot check indicates that this means something like 60,000 volumes, with only about 15,000 volumes common to all three institutions.

The Hill Foundation of Minnesota has given \$144,000 to finance this experiment, which will probably mean a central educational plant, perhaps at Tigard, where some of the work will be done that will apply on the curriculum of all three colleges. Some fields of education do not seem to be denominational, or even theological to any great degree. Maybe they all touch religion in more ways

than are readily apparent; but I should suppose that mathematics would not be considered Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Mohammedan, Hindu, Confucian, Buddhist nor anything but just mathematics, even though methods of teaching it may have greatly changed -- when I was younger they did not teach calculus in the kindergarten. I'd think that chemistry and physics might be taught in such a way as not to offend "orthodox" Quakers nor Greek Orthodox. In the realm of zoology you'd have to watch your step, for some men are so wicked that they do not believe that the earth was created in six days of twenty-four hours each.

Well, this ACCO is not my problem; pretty largely it is now the problem of one Dr. Milo C. Ross, president of George Fox College, and Dr. Lansing Bulgin, who has been employed for three years to head the ACCO, as a sort of executive secretary, though I do not know his title.

Tonight is the Alumni Banquet, and I do not know whether I had an invitation or not. It is the 50th anniversary of the Class of 1915, and they are having a reunion. How many will be on hand I do not know. The class consisted of:

Arthus Thomas Benson, who has for many years been Tom Benson, and until a few years ago was in the business of window glass, all the way, I believe, from ordinary window panes to polished plate glass. I have not seen him for many years. He lives in Portland, and I should suppose he will be here.

Harry W. Haworth. He and his wife, Esther Miles Haworth, live in Pasadena. They were up here for a considerable time last summer, and I'd guess that they will be here for this class reunion.

Florence Kaufman Harris. She died a good many years ago.

Lisle Hubbard. He has retired, and with his wife lives in Whittier. They were both at the dinner last evening, which is tentative evidence, at least, that they are not impoverished. It was good to see "Pete", as he was called.

R. Gladys Hannon Keyes. She also "went to join the great majority" as Father used to say sometimes of those who died.

Eva Campbell Knight. You'd know better than I would, probably, whether she is likely to be here. I wish she might be, but my guess is that she will not.

W. Ellis Pickett. I don't know where he is. He and his wife, who was a Newberg girl, lived in the country near here for a time some years ago, but I cannot think they are living in Oregon now, or I'd surely have seen them. *(They live at Spokane.)*

Walter H. Wilson. The last I knew he was living in Vermont. I'd guess that he is not likely to be here. He was decidedly older than most of the members of his class, and I'd not be surprised if I should learn that he is no longer in the land of the living. If he is still living he is nearly 84 years old, his wife died a good many years ago, if I remember correctly, and it seems to me that his health was not good the last time I heard from him.

For the first time since a considerable time ago I visited my "ranch" in the next block this morning. It looks as if the pear tree will be so loaded, if one can judge by the lower limbs, that the fruit should be much thinned or the pears will not be as big as they ought to be. It looks as if there would be bushels of cherries, and I'm hoping that I can get the trees sprayed today. Otherwise some of the cherries are likely to be inhabited. The one old prune tree has both prunes and dead limbs in its top, but there is promise of many more prunes than I shall need. Prospects look

good for walnuts and filberts. Too early to tell about the grapes. There are some apples on my dwarf trees, but none on the Gravenstein, and I'd rather have apples from that tree than from the other three. It is the youngest of the lot, and maybe I ought not to have hoped for any apples yet.

And now it is after eleven o'clock, I am back from the Alumni banquet, and I'm tired enough, but I don't feel like going to bed right now, so I'll write a bit more.

I'm enclosing the card that gives the menu, the program and the class list. Some of it was just what would have been expected. Of the six living members of the Class of 1915, four were present -- Eva Campbell Knight and Walter Wilson did not get here. The class made a contribution of \$1400 to the college as their Golden Anniversary gift. The pictures of the four men were taken, and another picture with the wives of three of them. Arthur H. (Tom) Benson's wife was not there -- she had a cancer removed from her jaw last fall, and though the doctors think they got it all, there are side effects that are still very painful.

It was surprising that of the class of 1940, 14 in number, only one was present, and that was one whose name I did not catch. The class consisted of Ervin Atrops, whose son is just graduating from a California College and he thought that he ought to be there; Willis Barney, a pastor in Idaho the last I knew; Jack Bennett, whose father served a term in state prison for defalcation and I never expect to see Jack again, though I think he occasionally comes back occasionally from Ohio to see his disbarred father and his mother, who has had more grief than she ever deserved, so far as I can see; Harold J. Davis, an aircraft worker in California; Howard M. Harrison, a long time teacher in Grants Pass who married Hazel Mary Houser -- it's my guess that Howard was tied up with commencement exercises of the High School in which he has served so long; Ruth Hodson -- I don't know where she is now, though the George Fox who's who says she is living in Portland; Alfreda Martin Anderson, lives somewhere in Washington, but I know little about her beyond that; Ladean Martin, a well known leader in agricultural and civic affairs, died recently; Le Roy Pierson, now a Ph.D., on the faculty of Portland State College; Robert Sieloff, married Irene Lewis, parole officer and social worker, Pomona, California; Irene Swanson Haisch, Vancouver, Washington; and Esther May Weesner, younger daughter of Oliver, Spokane, Washington. It is not a very distinguished class, but it would seem that they should have had more than one representative. (I don't know how I missed Stanley Keller, a Dunkard minister with a rather high position in their work in California -- I believe it was his son who is just graduating; and Orla Kendall, who lives at Walla Walla, Washington, and that's all I know about him these days.

The award of Alumnus of the Year went to Edwin Haines Burgess, who is still advisor to the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, though he retired some time ago.

The Main Speaker -- you see it says so on the program -- was Walter P. Lee, who does not rate as high in my estimation as he does with many other folks. He painted a gloomy picture of the world in which we live, and outlined what he considers the requisites for real Christian Leadership.

Guess I'd better end this and get to bed. Good night. Hope both of you have been asleep for hours.

June 6. 6:00 P.M. The seventy-third commencement of Pacific College has now passed into history, and just why I should be left in a state of depression is more than I'd undertake to explain. Perhaps because I am a bit tired; perhaps because of a distressing ^{dream} last night; perhaps because there is a sort of let-down, even as little as I have had to do except to act as a sort of spectator from the side lines.

I'm enclosing a number of programs, at least two, and that's a number. I've told you about the Commencement dinner and the alumni banquet, and now the baccalaureate service and the commencement program.

The baccalaureate was really quite a show. The vested a capella choir of the college, nearly half a hundred of them, made a fine showing in the choir loft; the seniors in their caps and gowns looked just like seniors in their caps and gowns, except that there was, or so it seemed to me, an unusually large proportion of the men who were over six feet in height, at least five of them and perhaps more; but the big show was the faculty in their gowns and hoods, a good share of them with doctor's hoods of many colors.

The program went as indicated. Janet Sweat wore her blond hair -- or maybe it was not all hers -- piled so high that she was strikingly conspicuous -- I saw only one ^{other} head of hair that was very unusual, and that was where one of the girls in the choir right in front of me this afternoon wore a Beatles-like wig on top of her own hair, a wig of a color so different from her own hair that it cried to heaven, "I am a wig."

I think I have heard about as many soloists that were better than Miss Sweat as those I have heard that were worse. She does not have a strong voice nor one of exceptionally sweet quality; but her voice was very accurate -- no fuzzy notes that are just a tiny bit off key, but correct pitch every time -- and her enunciation was clear -- you could understand the words, as can't be done at all with some soloists.

So far as I remember, I never heard an a capella choir sing a number that I enjoyed as well as I enjoyed "Dear Lord and Father of Mankind", one of the best things that Whittier wrote, as it seems to me.

Roy Clark was the baccalaureate speaker, his son being a member of the graduating class, and the college definitely undertakes to use the ministerial parents of graduates on special occasions wherever possible. I could have appreciated his sermon better if I could forget the way in which he undermined Emmett Gulley while still owing him for the money that Gulley had borrowed to loan to Clark to pay his moving expenses. It isn't a nice story, and I don't know what I can ever do about it. Clark made some acknowledgements years later, but he did not make them before the yearly meeting where he had made his attack on Emmett, and when he was dropped from the faculty as a condition of Gulley's reinstatement after after his second ~~resignation~~ resignation which was accepted, and then they had a board meeting that lasted from 8:00 till 1:30 and Clark was reinstated, with a promise of loyalty, that loyalty was not given, and Gulley's third resignation meant that he was definitely out at the end of that college year -- all of that was between me and Roy Clark as I listened to his every word. He said a lot of good things, and I wish I could have expressed my appreciation of them, but I

didn't do it. I'd have felt like a hypocrite if I had tried to talk to him as I could have talked with Edgar P. Sims or Calvin Choate or other folks who have not been folks whom whom I could go along with in everything, but in whose integrity I could have confidence. I was not sure whether I should feel like a coward for not meeting him, or like a man who deserved credit for avoiding a meeting that would have to be painful to us both, unless he could forget, as I have not succeeded in doing.

The commencement program went as printed except for the fact that Dean Gregory is in the hospital still, and nobody knows how long he will be there. The program was presented in the Hester Gymnasium, and if there is a worse auditorium from the standpoint of acoustics I do not know where it is. I suppose Mr. Nunn talked about "A Step Beyond", but you could not prove it by me. I did not understand one sentence that he read from his manuscript. He might have been talking on one of the themes that President Downey of Willamette University gave, strictly impromptu, to the men at the annual meeting of the Oregon Independent College Presidents Association. The only one I remember was "The relationship between Knute Rockne's backfield play and Einstein's Theory of Relativity, from the Hebrew Standpoint."

There were 30 graduates in this year's class, and three graduates before accreditation who did extra work and now get degrees from an accredited institution.

The number of scholarships and grants in aid seems to me excessively high, 64 of them; and in addition there are 13 Student Assistants listed; a total of 77 students that are not paying cash for their college expenses. Sixteen students doing Intensified Studies.

Quite enough about the college and the close of the college year. Maybe a lot too much.

I mentioned away back on another page a depressing dream I had last night. Usually I do not dream, and when I do it is seldom depressing or even unpleasant. But in this dream things were scandalously gloomy. It seemed that Mother was still alive, and we were out at El TeePee. She had been very ill, and I had had to be away, and had just returned. Mother had got up when it seemed that she was not well enough to do it; she was complaining in a way so different from her, she offended me so that I would not kiss her, though she asked me to, everything was wrong, the house was not in any such place as it is located, it was nowhere near the ocean nor any stream, and I can't tell you why I was so wretched in the dream, nor why the gloom of it remained when I awoke.

But there, I did not mean to cry on your shoulder. Let's talk about something else.

Dr. Claude Lewis, the Medford (Central Point) dentist was here for commencement, and he says that we'll go fishing at a lake near there some evening while I am there or on Saturday, maybe we'll go more than once. He has plenty of rods and other tackle, but I may take a favorite rod, but fishing from a boat I'll not need my hip boots, and I'll not take them -- I'll travel light by comparison with the bug case I carry when I go to Brookings.

I didn't get any college man to stay here next year, and maybe I'll try to make some arrangement by correspondence; or maybe when you come you'll advise me to rent the house to some congenial pair with whom I can live, if such a pair can be found. I

might have been able to rent the house for the summer, but that was the time when such a thing was unthinkable. My older daughter and her husband are to be here this summer, and the house is very definitely not for rent before the first of September, and maybe not as soon as that, no matter who might want to rent it.

And I just got a letter from Owen and Jeanne Pennington, my brother Parker's only son and his wife, who say in their closing paragraph, "We hope to return to the west in August after our 16 trip has returned to Ann Arbor August 7. We want to see you then, possibly on your birthday." If that plan is carried out, that will make two more for that birthday party August 29, if that party actually comes off.

I thought I'd write this letter bit at a time so that you'd not be getting a letter from me every other day or something like that. I'm not at all sure that it was a good idea. I don't think that a long letter like this is really a crime, but it is an offence of some sort. Anyhow I'm going to end it and get it on its way. Wouldn't it be a surprise if I did not write again till I return from Medford, on the 14th or later?

With love to both of you, and glad anticipations of 25 days from now,

Dr. and Mrs. Cecil E. Pearson,
Box 241,
Greene, New York.